Program and portfolio leadership: running many technical initiatives at once

26 October 2026 · 6 min read · blogs.iictp.org/program-and-portfolio-leadership

A programme is a group of related efforts managed together for a shared outcome. A portfolio is the set of programmes and projects an organisation chooses to fund. The skills change from managing work to managing choices.

TL;DR The short version

- A programme is a group of related efforts with a shared outcome; a portfolio is the set of work an organisation chooses to fund.
- Moving up, the job changes from managing work to managing choices: dependencies, shared risks and what is worth its cost.
- Keep one clear view of status and risk, and hold reviews that can end work, not only continue it.

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Program-level questions

- How do these efforts depend on one another?
- Where are the shared risks and the shared resources?
- What must be true for the outcome to be delivered?

Portfolio-level questions

- Which initiatives are worth their cost, and which should stop?
- Is the mix balanced between running the business and changing it?
- Do we have the people to do it all?

Habits that help

- One clear view of status, dependencies and risk.
- Regular reviews that can end work, not only continue it.
- Visible trade-offs when capacity is short.
- Leaders who ask for early bad news.

Related credential: Program Technical Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

Sources and further reading

1. IICTP. Program Technical Practitioner credential page. iictp.org/certifications/pgtp.
2. IICTP. Portfolio Technical Practitioner credential page. iictp.org/certifications/pftp.

Published by IICTP, an independent technical credential body, on 26 October 2026. The current version of this post is at https://blogs.iictp.org/program-and-portfolio-leadership. More guides: blogs.iictp.org.